

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT PARIS 18154 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ANKARA
ATHENS BONN BRUSSELS COPENHAGEN THE HAGUE LISBON LONDON
LUXEMBOURG OSLO OTTAWA REYKJAVIK ROME DUBLIN NATO MOSCOW
WARSAW PRAGUE BELGRADE BUCHAREST BUDAPEST BERLIN USBERLIN
MADRID SOFIA BORDEAUX LYON MARSEILLE NICE STRASBOURG
DATED JUN 20:

QTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 18154

USEEC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, FR

SUBJECT: FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY NATIONAL CONGRESS

SUMMARY: THE FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY CAME TO NANTES
JUNE 17 TALKING OF "SYNTHESIS," OF FINDING A COMPROMISE
BETWEEN THE MITTERRAND MAJORITY AND THE LEFT-WING CERES
MINORITY WHICH WOULD COMPLETELY UNIFY THE PARTY IN PRE-
PARATION FOR THE FINAL PUSH TOWARD POWER IN 1978. THE
CERES, REPRESENTING NEARLY 24 PERCENT OF THE PS, ARRIVED
IN A CONCILIATORY MOOD, TALKING OF DEMOCRACY WITHIN THE
PARTY AND DEFENDING THE LOGIC AND RATIONALITY OF ITS
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DIVERGENT IDEAS ON MAJOR ISSUES OF THE DAY - NATIONAL-
IZATION POLICY, EUROPE, THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
COMMON PROGRAM. BUT FIRST SECRETARY MITTERRAND CAME TO
NANTES SEEKING A TOTAL PARTY LOYALTY WHICH NO POLITI-
CAL COMPROMISE COULD HOPE TO DELIVER. HE PREVAILED AS
USUAL, REJECTING COMPLETELY THE SO-CALLED SYNTHESIS
WHICH WOULD HAVE INTEGRATED CERES POSITIONS INTO THE

PARTY PLATFORM AND MORE IMPORTANTLY WOULD HAVE BROUGHT CERES REPRESENTATION BACK INTO THE PARTY'S NATIONAL SECRETARIAT. IN SO DOING, MITTERRAND REAFFIRMED THE ABSOLUTE PRIORITY WHICH HE PLACES ON PARTY DISCIPLINE AS THE PS NEARS POWER, EVEN AT THE EXPENSE OF FOREGOING A POLITICALLY ADVANTAGEOUS PUBLIC CELEBRATION OF PS RECONCILIATION AND UNITY. END SUMMARY

1. THE WAR AGAINST "FRACTIONALISM": THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF THE NANTES CONGRESS WAS IDENTIFIED SOME TWO MONTHS AGO WHEN FRANCOIS MITTERRAND LAUNCHED HIS CAMPAIGN AGAINST "FRACTIONALISM" WITHIN THE PARTY. FOR THE RANK AND FILE OF THE PS, THE QUESTION WAS POSED IN TERMS OF ARTICLE 4 OF THE PARTY STATUTES (WHICH GUARANTEES COMPLETE FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION WITHIN THE PARTY BUT PROHIBITS THE EXISTENCE OF "ORGANIZED TENDENCIES"). THE IMMEDIATE TARGET WAS THE CERES, ACCUSED OF MAINTAINING SEPARATE OFFICES, COLLECTING INDEPENDENT DUES - IN SHORT, OF BEING A 'PARTY WITHIN THE PARTY.' THE MOTIVATION FOR SUCH AN EFFORT - GREATER PARTY UNITY IN PREPARATION FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS - SEEMED OBVIOUS ENOUGH, AS DID THE SOLUTION:

-- THE CERES WOULD ABANDON ITS INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY A FORM OF "DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM" IN NOT OPENLY CRITICIZING PARTY POSITIONS;
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-- IN RETURN, CERES LEADERS WOULD ONCE AGAIN SIT ON THE NATIONAL SECRETARIAT AND PARTY PROPAGANDA ORGANS WOULD BE MORE EASILY ACCESSIBLE TO ALL SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT.

2. AN EYE TO THE FUTURE: IN FACT, THE REAL ISSUE WAS NEVER AS SIMPLE AS MOST PARTY MILITANTS BELIEVED. FOR FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, THERE WAS PROBABLY NEVER A QUESTION OF CONCESSION OR COMPROMISE, BUT ONLY OF ABDICATION OR CAPITULATION. FROM HIS PERSPECTIVE-- THAT OF A MAN WITH AN HISTORIC MISSION, A MAN ON THE VERGE OF LEADING A GREAT POLITICAL AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION-- THE QUALITIES WHICH COUNT ARE DISCIPLINE, LOYALTY AND DEDICATION, ABSOLUTE AND TOTAL.

--THERE IS NOLONGER TIME FOR THE LUXURY OF SEMINGLY ENDLESS PHILOSOPHICAL THEORETICAL DEBATE WHEN ENERGIES COULD BE TURNED TOWARD THE REAL PROBLEMS OF WINNING AN ELECTION AND GOVERNING A MATION.

-- PARTY POSITIONS ARE ALREADY DEFINED TO THE EXTENT NECESSARY, AS IS THE COMMON PROGRAM OF THE UNION OF THE LEFT; MORE DEBATE AND FURTHER ELEABORATION SERVE ONLY TO CONFUSE THE ELCTORATE AND TO UNECESSARILY

RESTRICT FREEDOM OF ACTION FOR LEFT LEADERS. IN THAT CONTEXT, THERE WAS NEVER ROOM FOR POLITICAL COMPROMISE AT NANTES. WHILE NEVER DENYING THE RIGHT OF PARTY MEMBERS TO ARGUE INDEPENDENT LINES OF POLITICAL THOUGHT, MITTERRAND CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THAT IN THE EAR-TERM, ON THE ROAD TO POWER, THERE IS NO PLACE FOR SUCH DISSIDENCE AT THE HEAD OF THE PARTY: "UNANIMITY IS NOT NECESSARY AND IS EVEN DANGEROUS IN REACHING DECISIONS, BUT IT IS NECESSARY IN THEIR EXECUTION."

3. A QUESTION OF DEMOCRACY: THE CERES CAME TO NANTES EASY TO COMPROMISE, BUT ALSO INSISTING THAT ITS IDEAS WERE LOGICAL AND THOUGHTFUL AND AT LEAST WORTHY OF REAL DEBATE, IF NOT TOTAL ACCEPTANCE. THE CONCILIATION BEGAN
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EARLY AS CERES DELEGATES VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO SUPPORT THE CURRENT LEADERSHIP'S REPORT ON THE PARTY'S ADMINISTRATION OF THE LAST TWO YEARS AND CONTINUED IN THE CERES KEYNOTE SPEECH BY PIERRE GUIDONI, WHERE HE SAID, "WE'RE HERE TO DEFINE OUR CONVERGENCES, NOT TO MAKE MORE PROFOUND OUR DIVERGENCES." CERES MILITANTS WERE ALSO GENERALLY SUPPORTIVE OF THE SYNTHESIS CONCEPT, LARGELY AS A MEANS FOR HEALING THE WOUNDS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS AND THUS SOLIDIFYING THE PARTY FOR 1978. MILITANTS AND LEADERSHIP ALIKE WERE PREPARED TO GIVE UP THEIR ORGANIZATION, THEIR INDEPENDENT FINANCING, ETC, IN RETURN FOR SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF THEIR PROGRAM PROPOSALS AND FOR INCLUSION OF THEIR POINT OF VIEW IN THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP. WHEN NEGOTIATIONS DID BEGIN, THE CERES PROPOSED 23 AMENDMENTS, ALL BUT TWO OF WHICH (BOTH MONOR) WERE DEFEATED. THERE SIMPLY WAS NO ROOM FOR MANEUVER. SYNTHESIS WAS DEPENDENT ON TOTAL ABDICATION, ON GIVING UP THEIR RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT ANALYSIS AND CONSEQUENTLY THEIR RIGHT TO ARGUE WITHIN THE PARTY FOR ALTERNATIVE POSITIONS. FOR THE CERES, AS FOR OTHER MONORITIES, THIS ASPECT OF INTERNAL DEMOCRACY IS PARAMOUNT, FOR WITHOUT SUCH FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, THE MONORITY DIES, OR AT BEST SLOWLY WITHERS AWAY.

4. DEMOCRACY FRENCH STYLE: BUT WHILE THE CERES DEBATED DOMOCRACY, MITTERRAND ARGUED THE EFFICACY OF POWER. THERE WAS, IN TRUTH, NO CHALLENGE TO INTERNAL PARTY DEMOCRACY, EXCEPT AS SUCH DEMOCRACY IS VIEWED IN THE AMERICAN SENSE AS A VEHICLE FOR CONSENSUS BUILDING. THE MITTERRAND IMAGE OF PARTY DEMOCRACY IS, FOR THE MOMENT AT LEAST VERY MUCH IN THE FRENCH STYLE: THERE WILL BE WITHIN THE PARTY BOTH A MAJORITY AND AN OPPOSITION-- THE LATTER CAN DEBATE, BUT THE FORMER WILL DECIDE. IN SUCH
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CIRCUMSTANCES, THE MONORITY GOAL CAN ONLY BE TO OBTAIN 51 PERCENT OF THE VOTES. CERES DELEGATES LEFT THEIR FINAL CAUCUS TO THE REFRAIN OF A SLIGHTLY REERIT-TEN "HYMN TO SOCIALISM" (INTRODUCED FOR THE FIRST TIME ON OPENING NIGHT BY MIKIS THEODORAKIS): "FRANCOIS MITTERRAND, BECAUSE YOU EXIST, NOTHING IS POSSIBLE, HERE AND NOW. TOMORROW COMRADES."

5. THE SOCIALIST IMPERATIVE: ALTHOUGH MOMENTARILY DISCOURAGED AND DISILLUSIONED, THE CERES REMAINS FIRMLY A PART OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND AS COMMITTED AS EVER TO VICTORY IN 1978. EVEN WITHOUT RECEIVING ANY CONCESSION OR POLITICAL COMPROMISE, THE CERES STILL AGREED TO DISBAND ITS FORMAL ORGANIZATION (WHILE KEEPING ITS THEORETICAL JOURNAL "REPERES") IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE TERMS OF THE MAJORITY MOTION. WHY? BECAUSE IDEOLOGICALLY THE CERES BELIEVES FIRST AND FOREMOST IN THE SOCIALIST CAUSE (GUIDONI: "OUR PRIDE IS OUR FIDELITY: TO THE PARTY, BECAUSE ALL THAT WE ARE SAYING AND DOING MAKES SENSE ONLY IN AND FOR THE PARTY...") AND PRAGMATICALLY, BECAUSE IT WOULD BE NOWHERE AT ALL OUTSIDE THE PS. MOREOVER, THE CERES SEES ITSELF STILL AS THE DEFENDER OF IDEOLOGICAL LEFT UNITY AND AS PERHAPS THE LAST BARRIER TO A CULT OF PERSONALITY, OR TO A PARTY DEVOID OF IMAGINATION. THE CERES WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST AS AN OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED "CURRENT", RENOUNCING NEITHER ITS PROGRAMMATIC POSITIONS OR ITS FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

6. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE PS MAY SUFFER IN THE NEAR-TERM FROM A POPULAR IMAGE OF DISUNITY, THERE IS NO REASON TO PREDICT A SERIOUS OR LASTING IMPACT ON THE COHESIVENESS OF THE PARTY AS AN ELECTORAL MACHINE AND, IN ADDITION TO FIRMLY ESTABLISHING THE PRINCIPLE OF PARTY DISCIPLINE, MITTERRAND HAS GAINED ON OTHER FRONTS:

-- BY RESTRAINING THE CERES MOVEMENT WITHIN THE PARTY, HE HAS SHOWN THE NON-PRODUCTIVE (AND EVEN DANGEROUS) NATURE OF THE SPONTANEOUS "MASS MOVEMENT" ON THE CAREFULLY CHARTED ROAD TO SOCIALISM, A DANGER HE SEES AS WELL IN THE TRADE UNIONS (READ: CFDT AND CGC);

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--IN CLEARLY DEMONSTRATING HIS DOMINANCE OVER THE CERES, HE HAS DISARMED SOMEWHAT CRITICS ON THE RIGHT WHO HAVE BEEN WARNING OF CERES EXTREMISM AND FURTHER DISABUSED HIS PCF ALLIES OF ANY NOTION OF SERIOUS

INTERNAL PS PRESSURES ON THEIR BEHALF.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE CONGRESS PRODUCED LITTLE DEBATE ON THE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES OF THE COMMON PROGRAM, EUROPE, NATIONALIZATION POLICY, INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, DEFENSE, AND THE LIKE, BUT WHEN SEEN IN ITS TRUE CONTEXT OF ORGANIZATIONALLY SQUARING THE PARTY AWAY FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS, THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT MITTERRAND HAS PUT HIS HOUSE IN ORDER.

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